

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOR POLADS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, JUNE 4, FROM ATHENS RPTD
TO YOU:

QUOTE

S E C R E T ATHENS 3593

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJ: FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON GREEK REGIME' S PROCLAMATION
OF A REPUBLIC

1. PROCLAMATION OF A REPUBLIC IN GREECE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE HIGHLY CHECKERED HISTORY OF
THE MONARCHY IN GREECE SINCE THE GREAT POWERS IMPOSED THE
BAVARIAN OTTO AS KING IN 1832. THIS FIFTH TIME KING HAS
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BEEN DEPOSED. FROM 1922 TO 1935 GREECE WAS A REPUBLIC.
PREVAILING SENTIMENT IN THE COUNTRY IS CONSIDERED BY MANY
INFORMED OBSERVERS TO BE REPUBLICAN. THE ISSUE OF RESTORING
DEMOCRACY COMPLICATED THE PRESENT SITUATION BECAUSE IN PRAC-

TICE GREECE NEVER REALLY HAD A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY IN ITS ACCEPTED WESTERN EUROPEAN SENSE. THE KING CONSISTENTLY AND WIDELY INTERVENED IN THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT. TO THIS DEGREE GREEK DEMOCRACY IN THE PAST HAS BEEN FAULTED. HOWEVER, THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MONARCHY HAS BEEN ABOLISHED INSTEAD OF DISPOSING OF THE ISSUE DEFINITELY LEAVES IT AT LEAST AS OPEN AS BEFORE, FOR IT REMAINS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO BE THE FOCAL POINT OF OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME AND MAY EVEN BECOME A FORCE FOR THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN GREECE.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DECLARATION OF THE REPUBLIC, IT NEEDS TO BE STRESSED, HAS WITH ONE FELL SWOOP REMOVED ONE MAJOR OBSTACLE WHICH MANY HAVE ALLEGED MADE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1968 CONSTITUTION IMPOSSIBLE. MANY IN THE REGIME TURNED DECISIVELY AGAINST THE KING AFTER HIS ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO TURN THE ARMY AGAINST THE ARMY IN DECEMBER 1967. FURTHER, IT HAS ALSO BEEN EVIDENT FOR A LONG TIME THAT PAPADOPOULOS WISHES TO STAY IN POWER AND HAS FEARED MOST AS A RIVAL KARAMANLIS, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZED KARAMANLIS' GREAT ABILITY, HIS POPULARITY GENERALLY, AND HIS RELATIVELY GOOD STANDING WITH THE ARMY. RECENT KARAMANLIS STATEMENT WHICH ANTICIPATED CONTINUING ROLE FOR KING, APPARENTLY HAD WIDE IMPACT ON PUBLIC OPINION IN GREECE AND PROBABLY ALSO PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN PM'S JUNE 1 DECISION TO DECLARE REPUBLIC. BY SEEKING TO IMPLICATING KARAMANLIS IN THE SO- CALLED NAVY PLOT, PM HAS PROVIDED BASIS TO PREVENT KARAMANLIS' S RETURN TO GREECE AND REENTRY INTO GREEK POLITICS, AND EVEN TO DEPRIVE HIM OF CITIZENSHIP IF THIS BECAME DESIRABLE. PM MUST BELIEVE THAT HE HAS ELIMINATED A MOST FORMIDABLE POTENTIAL RIVAL.

3. DESPITE TACTICAL ADVANTAGES FOR PM OF HIS NEW POSITION, IN TERMS OF U. S. INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES THERE ARE STILL SOME SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED. IN HIS STATEMENT TO THE GREEK PEOPLE JUNE 1 PAPADOPOULOS DECLARED THAT THE PRE-CONDITIONS FOR A RETURN TO NORMAL (AND PRESUMABLY SANITIZED) SECRET

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POLITICAL LIFE HAVE NOW BEEN REALIZED. " MANIFEST SELF- CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN CREATED". HOWEVER, AS OUR REPORTING HAS INDICATED OVER A PERIOD OF MANY MONTHS, THE PROBLEMS FACING PAPADOPOULOS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY SERIOUS, THE NAVAL DEFECTION BEING ONLY THE LATEST AND, OF COURSE, BY FAR THE MOST SERIOUS (SEE EMBASSY' S PREVIOUS TELEGRAM ON QUESTION OF RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION).

4. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, PM HAS NOW SET A TIMETABLE. BUT WILL HE IN FACT ADHERE TO THIS TIMETABLE? WILL HE PERMIT FREE CAMPAIGNING FOR AND AGAINST THE PLEBISCITE? WILL HE HOLD ELECTIONS THAT ARE SUFFICIENTLY FREE TO SATISFY MOST IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS? SOME OF THE BENCHMARKS IMPARTIAL OBSER-

VERS WILL BE LOOKING FOR IN THIS CONTEXT INCLUDE ABSENCE OF RESTRICTIONS ON THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, ABSENCE OF RESTRICTIONS ON PERSONAL PARTICIPATION IN SUCH POLITICAL PARTIES AS ARE ORGANIZED; COMPLETE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE ATHENS AREA; FREEDOM OF THE PRESS TO DISCUSS FULLY ALL RELEVANT ASPECTS OF PLEBISCITE AND ELECTION ISSUES; RELEASE OF NUMEROUS PERSONS OPPOSED TO REGIME WHOSE " CRIME " IS THAT THEY WANTED DEMOCRACY IN GREECE; WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT FREE OBSERVATION OF CAMPAIGNING AND DISCUSSION DURING PERIODS PRECEDING PLEBISCITE AND ELECTIONS; ETC. ON THE EVE OF THE PLEBISCITE, THE CONTINUED ARRESTS OF MONARCHISTS DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR THE KIND OF VOTING THAT MAY BE ALLOWED TO TAKE PLACE. KING CONSTANTINE' S FORCEFUL JUNE 2 STATEMENT (ROME 9090) HAS ALREADY BROUGHT THESE CONDITIONS TO PUBLIC ATTENTION.

5. PROSPECTS FOR FULFILLMENT OF ABOVE CONDITIONS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF PAST PRACTICES, PUBLIC UTTERANCES AND POSTURE OF THE REGIME AT THIS POINT ARE NOT ENCOURAGING. CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM IN 1968 AND RECENT STUDENT AND LABOR UNION ELECTIONS ARE HARDLY ACCEPTABLE MODELS. THE MANNER IN WHICH EPOK BEING DEVELOPED (ATHENS 3539) SUGGEST PM AIMING FOR A " TAME " AND CAPTIVE PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, THE DYNAMICS OF OTHER REGIME PROBLEMS COULD LEAD TO MORE RATHER THAN LESS FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS ENUMERATED, OR AS IS NOTED BELOW, COULD PROVIDE A BASIS FOR THEIR POSTPONEMENT.

6. THE PLEBISCITE MUST PRODUCE RESULTS IN FAVOR OF THE
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REGIME BECAUSE, UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONDITIONS PM' S JUNE 1 SPEECH, IT MUST GET A NEW LEGAL MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE TO UNDERPIN CLAIM TO " LEGITIMACY " . AT SAME TIME NO ELECTION WILL BE ACCEPTED BY PUBLIC OPINION IN THE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES UNLESS IT IS CONDUCTED FAIRLY AND PERMITS FREEDOM OF CHOICE TO ELECTORATE, INCLUDING RIGHT OF OPPOSITION TO PARTICIPATE IN PRE- ELECTION CAMPAIGNING. IF GOG ARBITRARILY EXCLUDES FORMER POLITICAL LEADERS FROM THE POLITICAL ARENA IT WILL PROVOKE THE GRAVEST ACCUSATIONS OF A RIGGED AND FAKE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION. IN THIS REGARD, DEPT WILL RECALL THE RECENT WORDS OF KARAMANLIS THAT ANY SUCH " SHAM " WILL CREATE A SITUATION WORSE THAN THAT INVOLVING NO ACTION WHATEVER. KING' S JUNE 2 STATEMENT MAKE SAME POINT; FORMER POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE ECHOED THIS.

7. ATTITUDE OF OPPOSITION ITSELF COULD HAVE A MAJOR EFFECT ON PLEBISCITE- REFERENDUM PROCESS. IF THEY FLATLY AND IMMEDIATELY CHOOSE TO DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES THEY MAY PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE IN THE REGIME INCLINED TOWARDS RIGGING AND FALSIFICATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO PRESSURES FOR A FREE PLEBISCITE AND ELECTIONS BY INSISTING ON THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION AND ON CERTAIN OTHER

PRECONDITIONS (PARA 3 ABOVE). IF THESE CONDITIONS ARE NOT MET, THEIR SUBSEQUENT PROTESTS AND OPPOSITION WILL BE MORE IMPRESSIVE BOTH IN GREECE AND ABROAD. IN FACT, AS PAPA-DOPOULOS HAS SET UP THE PLEBISCITE FOR ELECTIONS-- I. E., MONARCHY VS. DEMOCRACY-- IT IS IN FACT A RIGGED SITUATION. THIS IN ITSELF IS LIKELY TO LEAVE A SERIOUS CLOUD OF LEGITIMACY OVER REFERENDUM RESULTS FOR MANY YEARS.

8. ANOTHER QUESTION RELEVANT TO ASSESSMENT OF THE PROSPECT OF ELECTIONS WILL BE THE APPRAISAL OF PAPADOPOULOS WITH THE PASSING OF TIME OF HIS CHANCES OF WINNING. HE EVIDENTLY DOES NOT THINK HE COULD WIN A STRAIGHTFORWARD REFERENDUM ON THE MONARCHY VERSUS THE PRESENT REGIME. IF HE THINKS THE RISKS OF DEFEAT ARE TOO HIGH, HE WILL EITHER GET PATTAKOS TO RIG THE RESULTS WITH A MINIMUM BUT NECESSARILY OUTRAGEOUS FALSIFICATION OR SURROUND ELECTION PROCESS WITH CONDITIONS THAT WILL EXPOSE ITS SHAM CHARACTER. IT ALSO REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE HARDLINERS WHO OPPOSE DEMOCRACY IN PRINCIPLE WILL PERMIT HIM UNDER ANY CIRCUM-
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STANCES TO PROCEED WITH HIS SCHEDULE. PM'S STRONG POINT FOR ADHERING TO ELECTION TIMETABLE CAN BE THAN IN THIS WAY GOG WILL DECISIVELY SHATTER THE POPULAR FRONT WHICH BUILT UP BEHIND THE KING AND KARAMANLIS EXTENDING FROM THE KKE TO THE EXTREME RIGHT. HOWEVER, THE EFFECT COULD BE THE OPPOSITE, AND THE KING AND KARAMANLIS MAY NOW TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN BUILDING UP AN OPPOSITION FRONT OF THEIR OWN. GREEK COMMUNISTS AND LEFTISTS IN GREECE AND ABROAD (E. G., ANDREAS PAPANDREOU AND THEODORAKIS) WILL NOT BE UNHAPPY THAT PAPADOPOULOS HAS REALIZED AT EXPENSE OF HIS OWN INTERESTS ONE OF THEIR OBJECTIVES, I. E., THE ABOLITION OF THE MONARCHY-- LONG AN ANTI- COMMUNIST SYMBOL. HOWEVER, THEY MAY FEEL FOR TACTICAL REASONS THAT SITUATION NONETHELESS REQUIRES MORE RATHER THAN LESS COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AMONG OPPOSITION ELEMENTS.

9. ANOTHER FACET OF IMMEDIATE POTENTIAL IMPACT WILL BE REACTIONS OF NATO COUNTRIES. IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE (ATHENS 3554) I HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED THIS MATTER IN SOME DETAIL. IT SUFFICES TO REPEAT HERE THAT IF NATO AND OTHER EXTERNAL PRESSURE AND CRITICISM BECOME EXTREMELY SHARP ON ISSUE OF THE REPUBLIC AND GREEK INTERNAL POLICIES, I BELIEVE GREEK REGIME IS NOW RESIGNED TO ENVISAGE GREEK WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO JUST AS WAS CASE FROM COUNCIL OF EUROPE. IN GREEK EYES NATO IS VERY SICK INDEED, AND THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY IS IN DEEP DISARRAY. HOWEVER, THIS WOULD NOT OFFEND GREEK DEEP ATTACHMENT TO CONTINUING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U. S.

10. BUT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS WHETHER PAPADOPOULOS AT THIS TIME, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE REGIME, CAN SAVE HIMSELF

BY THIS DRAMATIC TOUR DE FORCE. THIS POSES THE FURTHER QUESTION WHETHER TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE HE SHOULD BE HELPED IN THIS REGARD. THE MOVE TO A REPUBLIC, TO PLEBISCITE AND TO ELECTIONS ARE MOVES IN EXTREMIS REFLECTING THE FACT THAT PAPADOPOULOS HAS FAILED ESSENTIALLY AS A POLITICAL LEADER. AFTER SIX YEARS THERE IS STILL UNREST IN THE ARMY; THE LOYALTY OF THE AIR FORCE IS SUSPECT; THE NAVY IS IN SHAMBLES; THE PROBLEM OF INFLATION IS GROWING. OTHER FESTERING ISSUES INCLUDE STUDENTS, CYPRUS, THE CHURCH, INEFFICIENT GOVERNMENT " ADMINISTRATION," AND CORRUPTION. ALL THESE
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DEVELOPMENTS ON TOP OF THE NORMAL POLITICAL EROSION OF SIX YEARS IN POWER PUT THE FUTURE OF PAPADOPOULOS IN SERIOUS QUESTION. IN FACT, THERE IS AN UNREAL NOTE IN PRIMIN' S STATEMENT TO THE GREEK PEOPLE. DESPITE PUBLIC EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY, HE HAS DELIBERATELY CHOSEN TO PRESENT THE FRONT OF A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTIONARY REGIME IN FULL CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF GREECE' S SITUATION THAT HAS KNOWN AND CONTINUES TO KNOW WHERE IT IS GOING.

11. THIS IS SIMPLY NOT AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE REALITIES HERE. SUCH A SELF- SERVING DECLARATION CAN BE TAKEN AS A MEASURE OF A LEADER WHO IS INDEED CONCERNED ABOUT HIS FUTURE. THIS IS WHY I BELIEVE THE PRECIPITOUS MOVE TO A REPUBLIC UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IF A MOVE " IN EXTREMIS." THE CHANCES OF PAPADOPOULOS SURVIVING ARE INCREASINGLY SHRINKING. THE SHOCKING DRAMA OF THE GREEK NAVY AND ITS OFFICERS BEING INVESTIGATED AND PROBED AND OF ITS BEST LINE OFFICERS SUBJECTED TO INTERROGATION, AND WE HEAR EVEN WORSE, PRESENTS A DISMAL PICTURE INDEED AND A SEVERE BLOW TO GREEK NATIONAL PRIDE IN THE BROADEST SENSE. IN THIS CONTEXT THE ARMY AND THE REGIME MAY COME TO BELIEVE GREEK NATIONAL INTEREST AND CREDIBILITY REQUIRE A NEW LEADER AND NEW FACE. EVEN SO WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE THE ENORMOUS SHREWDNESS AND CUNNING OF PAPADOPOULOS NOR HIS OVERRIDING DESIRE TO SURVIVE.

12. TO SUM UP, THE GREEK MILITARY REGIME IS FACING A SERIES OF VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS INDEED. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC MAY SUCCEED AS A PAPERING OVER OPERATION, BUT IT MAY WELL FAIL TO MEET THE OVERRIDING IMPERATIVES OF PRESENT GREEK POLITICAL DYNAMICS. AT THIS POINT IT APPEARS PROBLEMATIC WHETHER PAPADOPOULOS CAN PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP REQUIRED TO RETURN GREECE TO POLITICAL NORMALITY THROUGH A PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION, CONSULTATION, AND STRONG INITIATIVES. IF HE SHOULD SUCCEED, HE WILL BE THE MIRACLE MAN OF GREECE IN THIS ENTURY. I BELIEVE IN THE POSSIBILITIES OF MIRACLES AND THE ESSENTIAL CAPACITIES OF LEADERS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGE, BUT I DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE PRUDENT FOR US TO COUNT ON THIS HAPPENING. ALL IN ALL, THIS INITIATIVE BY PAPADOPOULOS IS UNLIKELY TO BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IN REDUCING THE BASIS FOR ATTACKS ON THE REGIME FROM OPPOSITION

QUARTERS IN GREECE AND ABROAD. IN FACT, IT MAY HAVE THE
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CONTRARY EFFECT OF HARDENING THE OPPOSITION. THEIR VIEW MAY NOW
BECOME THAT ULTIMATELY ONLY VIOLENCE CAN BRING BACK DEMOCRACY
AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. A PEACEFUL TRANSITION OFFERING
THE POSSIBILITY OF RECONCILIATION ON THE BASIS OF FULL
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1968 CONSTITUTION NOW CMES MORE CLEARLY
INTO DOUBT. THE SITUATION HERE HAS BECOME NOTABLE MORE
FLUID AND THE FUTURE MORE MURKY.

13. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT OUR PRESENT POLICIES
TOWARD GREECE REMAIN VALID.

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